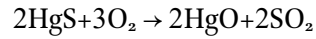
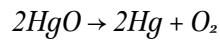


अधःपातन (adhaḥpātana) “causing to fall downward”: The Downward Distillation of Mercury

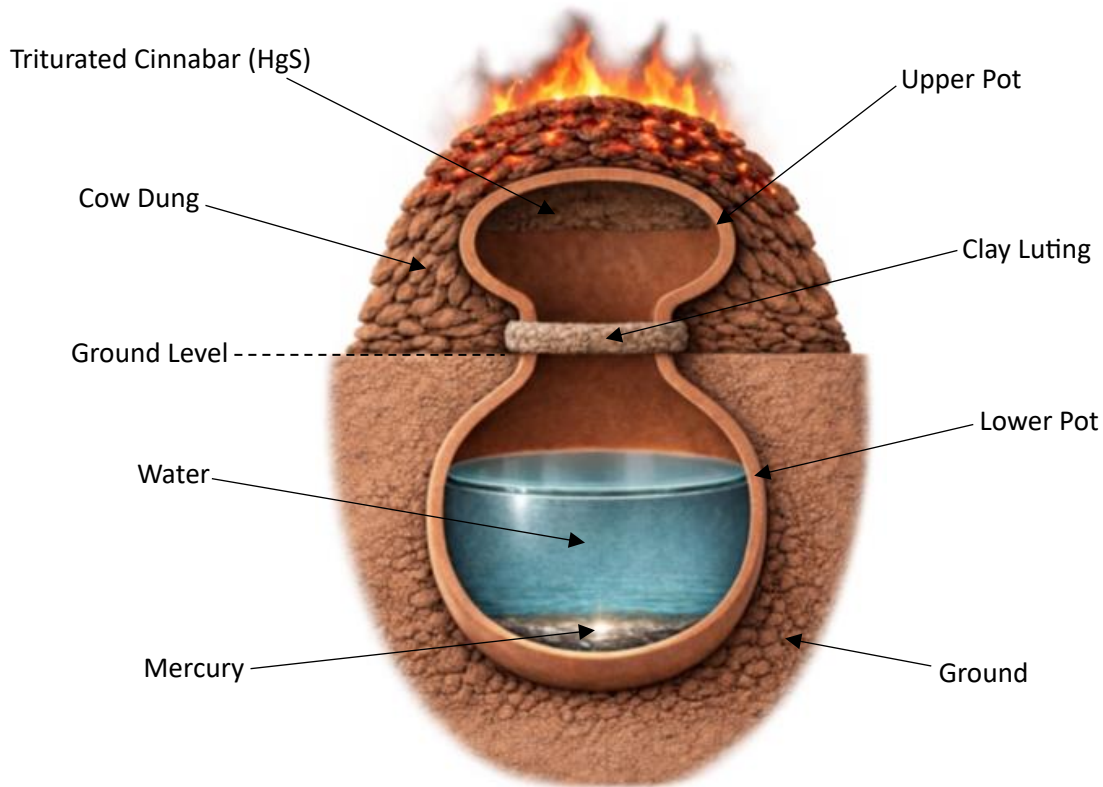
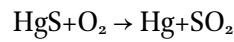
Oxidation (Roasting) of Cinnabar:



Thermal Decomposition of Mercury (II) Oxide:



Overall (Net) Reaction (and its Products):



Adhaḥpātana Yantra Method

Hingula (cinnabar) is first trituated (ground into a fine paste) with fresh ginger juice, or alternatively with the expressed juice of *Artocarpus lacucha* (Monkey Jack) or lemon, until a smooth paste is formed. This paste is then smeared evenly over the inner surface of the upper vessel of the adhaḥpātana yantra (a contrivance causing mercury to fall downward).

A second earthen pot is buried in the ground so that its body remains below the surface while its neck projects above. It is partly filled with a sufficient quantity of water. The paste coated vessel is inverted over this lower pot, and the mouths of the two vessels are carefully joined and sealed with luting clay to prevent the escape of vapours.

A heap of dried cow-dung cakes is then stacked over the upper vessel and set alight, providing a steady and moderate heat for approximately three praharas (nine hours). Under this sustained heating, mercury is liberated from the heated cinnabar as vapour, descends into the cooler lower chamber, condenses, sinks through the water, and collects at the bottom of the lower pot.

After the heating period, the apparatus is left undisturbed and allowed to cool naturally overnight. On the following morning the seal is broken, the vessels are separated, and the mercury obtained from cinnabar is recovered from the bottom of the lower pot.

Alchemical Symbolism in the Gorakṣanātha Narrative

The episode of Gorakṣanātha's emergence from the dung heap may also be read symbolically in light of rasaśāstra practice. In the adhaḥpātana yantra, cinnabar is heated in a sealed, earth-buried apparatus fuelled by cow-dung cakes, and purified mercury descends and is recovered from below.^{1, 2, 3}

The hagiographical image of a radiant boy arising unsullied from dung and earth parallels this alchemical pattern of concealed incubation, downward transformation, and purified emergence.

On a further level, the apparatus itself may be understood as a metaphor for the yogic body, in which heat, containment, and internal descent refine and stabilise the subtle essence. Such a reading is interpretive rather than literal, but it illuminates the shared symbolic grammar of Nātha hagiography, alchemy, and haṭha-yogic physiology.

1. Chapter XXII, verses 64–81 (in the Marathi language), of the Śrī Bhaktavijaya, composed by the saint-poet Mahīpatibovā of Tāharābād:

ऐसिया गोष्टीस पुढती ॥ द्वादश वर्षे क्रमिलीं निगुतीं ॥ तों फेरी करून मत्स्येंद्र जती ॥ अकस्मात पातले ॥६४॥

aisiyā goṣṭīs puḍhātī || dvādaśa varṣeṃ kramilīm nigutīm || toṃ pherī karūn matsyendra jatī || akasmāt pātale ||64||

64. After this event, twelve years passed in due course; then, while making his rounds, Matsyendra the ascetic arrived there suddenly.

स्वेच्छा हिंडतां नगरांतरी ॥ आले सावकाराचें घरीं ॥ अलख म्हणोनि द्वारी ॥ साद घाली तेधवां ॥६५॥

शब्द ऐकतां गृहस्वामिनी ॥ तत्काळ आली भिक्षा घेऊनी ॥ दृष्टादृष्टी होतां ते क्षणीं ॥ मागील आठवणी पडियेली ॥६६॥

svecchā hiṇḍatām nagarāntarīm || āle sāvakārācēṃ gharīm || alakh mhaṇoni dvārīm || sād ghālī tedhavām ||65||

śabda aikatām grhasvāminī || tatkaḷ ālī bhikṣā gheūnī || dṛṣṭādṛṣṭī hotām te kṣaṇīm || māgīl āṭhavaṇī paḍiyelī ||66||

65. Wandering at will through the town, he came to the merchant's house; uttering "Alakh" at the doorway, he called out there.

66. Hearing the sound, the mistress of the house came at once, bringing alms; when their eyes met in that moment, her former memory returned.

मत्स्येंद्र म्हणे तिजेप्रती ॥ तुज मंत्रोनि दिधली विभूती ॥ तो पुत्र सत्बरगती ॥ आम्हांप्रती भेटवी ॥६७॥

एकोनि सावकारपत्नी ॥ भयभीत जाहली मनी ॥ म्हणे यथार्थ सांगतां यालागूनी ॥ करील शापोनि भस्म येथें ॥६८॥

matsyendra mhaṇe tiyepṛatī || tuj mantraoni didhalī vibhūti || to putra satvaragatī || āmhāṃpṛatī bheṭavī ||67||

aikoni sāvākārpātṇī || bhayabhīta jāhalī manī || mhaṇe yathārtha sāṅgatāṃ yālāgūnī || karīl śāponi bhasma yethem ||68||

67. Matsyendra said to her, "I gave you the sacred ash, empowered with mantra; that son, with swift speed, will come to meet us."

68. Hearing this, the merchant's wife became afraid in her heart; she thought, "If I speak the truth, he will curse me and reduce me to ashes here."

मग मौन धरुनि न बोले कांहीं ॥ मत्स्येंद्र म्हणे सांगें लवलाहीं ॥ विभूति भक्षिली किंवा कोणे ठायी ॥ टाकोनियां दिधली ॥६९॥

maga mauna dharūni na bole kāhīm || matsyendra mhaṇe sāṅgeṃ lavalāhīm || vibhūti bhakṣilī kīvā koṇe ṭhāī || ṭākoṇiyāṃ didhalī ||69||

69. Then she kept silent and spoke nothing; Matsyendra said, "Tell it at once: did you consume the sacred ash, or in what place did you cast it away?"

यावरी म्हणे सावकारकांता ॥ यथार्थ वचन ऐका आतां ॥ परबुद्धि कानीं ऐकतां ॥ विकल्प चित्ता पातला ॥७०॥

yāvarī mhaṇe sāvākārakāṃtā || yathārtha vacana aikā ātām || parabuddhi kānīm aikatām || vikalpa cittā pātālā ||70||

70. Thereupon the merchant's wife said, "Now listen to the truth; hearing another's counsel in my ear, doubt entered my mind."

कांहीं कृत्रिम असेल चिती ॥ म्हणोनि चुलींत टाकिली विभूती ॥ ऐसी प्रारब्धाची गती ॥ प्रजापतीनें लिहिलीसे ॥७१॥

kāhīm kṛtrima asel cittī || mhaṇoni cūlīṃt ṭākilī vibhūti || aisī prārabdhācī gatī || prajāpatīneṃ lihīlīse ||71||

71. "Perhaps it may have been artificial," she thought in her mind, and so she cast the sacred ash into the hearth; such is the course of destiny, as written by Prajāpati.

मत्स्येंद्र म्हणे ते समयी ॥ राख टाकिली कवणे ठायी ॥ तें सत्वर सांग लवलाहीं ॥ संकोच कांहीं न धरितां ॥७२॥

matsyendra mhaṇe te samayī || rākh ṭākilī kavane ṭhāī || teṃ satvara sāṅga lavalāhīm || saṃkoca kāhīm na dharitām ||72||

72. Matsyendra said at that time, "In which place was the ash thrown? Tell it at once, without delay, and harbour no hesitation."

म्हणे कृषीवले खाणोनि खात ॥ नेली ते जागा विस्तीर्ण बहुत ॥ द्वादश वर्षपर्यंत ॥ गोंवर टाकितो ते ठायी ॥७३॥

mhaṇe kṛṣṭivaleṃ khāṇoni khāta || nelī te jāgā vistīrṇa bahut || dvādaśa varṣeṃparyanta || goṃvara ṭākitom te ṭhāim
||73||

73. They replied: ¹ “The husbandmen (on the land), eating and consuming, used that wide and extensive place, and for twelve years they have been throwing cow-dung there.”

1. The merchant's wife and the household members listening nearby, inferred from the narrative context.

मग तत्काळ बाहेर जाऊनी ॥ तें स्थळ दिधलें दाखवूनी ॥ म्हणती येथेंचि राख बहुत दिनीं ॥ टाकीत असों
स्वामिया ॥७४॥

maga tatkaḷ bāhera jāūnī || teṃ sṭhaḷ didhale dākhavūnī || mhaṇatī yethemci rākh bahut dinīm || ṭākīt asom svāmiyā
||74||

74. Then at once they went outside, and showed him that place; they said, “Here indeed, we have been casting ashes for many days, O Master.”

तेव्हां उकरड्यावरी जाऊनि त्वरित ॥ उभें ठाकिले मत्स्येंद्रनाथ ॥ अलख म्हणतांचि त्वरित ॥ नवल अद्भुत
वर्तलें ॥७५॥

tevham ukaraḍyāvarī jāūni tvarita || ubhe ṭhākile matsyendranātha || alakh mhaṇatāñci tvarita || navala adbhuta
vartale ||75||

75. Then, going swiftly to the dung-heap, Matsyendranātha stood there; as soon as he uttered “Alakh”, a marvellous and wondrous event occurred.

गुरुजी आदेश म्हणूनी ॥ भूर्मीतूनि उठला प्रतिध्वनी ॥ ऐसें ऐकतां सकळ जनीं ॥ आश्चर्य मनीं करिताती ॥७६॥

guruji ādeśa mhaṇūnī || bhūmīmtūni uṭhalā pratidhvanī || aiseṃ aikatām sakaḷ janīm || āścarya manīm karitātī ||76||

76. Uttering the Guru's command, an echo arose from the earth; hearing this, all the people were filled with wonder in their minds.

मग मत्स्येंद्रें सांगोनि तिथेप्रती ॥ मनुष्यांकरवीं उकरवी माती ॥ तों द्वादश वर्षांची सतेज मूर्ती ॥ दृष्टीं अवचितीं
देखिली ॥७७॥

maga matsyendrem sāṅgoni tiyepṛatī || manuṣyāṃkaravīm ukaravī mātī || tom dvādaśa varṣāñci sateja mūrtī || dṛṣṭīm
avacitīm dekhilī ||77||

77. Then Matsyendra, instructing them accordingly, had the earth dug up by the men; there, a radiant form of twelve years of age was suddenly seen before their eyes.

जैसा पौर्णिमेचा निशाकर ॥ तैसी सोज्ज्वळ कांति सुंदर ॥ बत्तीसलक्षणी सुकुमार ॥ जो साक्षात् अवतार विष्णूचा
॥७८॥

jaisā paurṇimecā niśākara || taisī sojjvaḷa kānti sundara || battīsalakṣaṇī sukumāra || jo sākṣāt avatāra viṣṇūcā ||78||

78. Like the full moon of the night, such was his bright and beautiful radiance; a tender one marked with the thirty-two auspicious signs, who was in truth an incarnation of Viṣṇu.

साजिरें श्रीमुख आकर्णनयन ॥ कर्णी मुद्रिका शोभायमान ॥ आधार नसतां घालोनि आसन ॥ स्मरण करीत
बैसला ॥७९॥

sājireṃ śrīmukha ākarṇanayana || karṇiṃ mudrikā śobhāyamāna || ādhāra nasatāṃ ghālani āsana || smaraṇa karīta
baisalā ||79||

79. With a graceful and auspicious face, his eyes extending to the ears,¹ earrings shining in his ears, without any support he assumed a seated posture, and sat absorbed in remembrance.

1. *Ākarṇanayana* (आकर्णनयन), literally “eyes reaching to the ears,” is a conventional expression in Indian aesthetic and physiognomic literature denoting elongated, lotus-shaped eyes extending toward the temples. It signifies superhuman beauty and is counted among the auspicious bodily marks of an extraordinary or divine being; the phrase is not anatomical but symbolic of elevated status and luminous presence.

नाहीं अंगासी लागली माती ॥ देखोनि लोक आश्चर्य करिती ॥ मग मत्स्येंद्र येऊनि सत्वरगती ॥ सावध करीत
तयासी ॥८०॥

nāhīṃ aṅgāsī lāgalī mātī || dekhoni loka āścarya karitī || maga matsyendra yeūni satvaragatī || sāvadh karīt tayāsī ||80||

80. No earth had adhered to his body; seeing this, the people marvelled; then Matsyendra came swiftly and brought him back to awareness.

मस्तकीं ठेवितां अभयकर ॥ घातला साष्टांग नमस्कार ॥ हातीं घेऊनि निजकुमार ॥ मत्स्येंद्र सत्वर चालिले
॥८१॥

mastakīṃ thevitāṃ abhayakara || ghātalā sāṣṭāṅga namaskāra || hātīṃ gheūni nijakumāra || matsyendra satvara cālile
||81||

81. Placing the hand of blessing upon his head, he, (the boy), performed a full prostration with all eight limbs; then, taking his own son into his arms, Matsyendra departed swiftly.

Marathi to English translation, Śrī Maccidānanda Nātha.

2. See also page 182, ‘Gorakhnāth and the Kānpḥaṭa Yogīs’ by George Weston Briggs. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers PVT. Ltd. ISBN: 978-81-208-0564-4; and, Chapter 22 (Matsyendranath, Gorakhnath and Changdev) of ‘Stories of Indian Saints: English Translation of Mahipati’s Marathi Bhaktavijaya’ by Justin E. Abbot and Narhar R. Godbole. Published in two volumes by Aryabhusan Press, Poona City (1933).

3. *Bhāvanā* in *rasaśāstra* denotes a cyclical process of levigation in which a dry powder is repeatedly re-infused with a selected liquid medium, not merely moistened but thoroughly permeated. After each grinding phase, the mass is fully dried, thereby fixing what has been introduced. Repetition deepens penetration and progressively alters the material substrate. In a symbolic extension, this cyclic impregnation provides an analogue for yogic physiology: the subtle body is repeatedly suffused with *prāṇa*-driven *śakti* and subsequently stabilised. The oscillation between ascent and descent mirrors the alternation of wetting and drying. Such a comparison, however, remains interpretive; the primary meaning of *bhāvanā* in alchemical literature is procedural and pharmacotechnical rather than explicitly energetic.

The yogi recognises this process through the arising and falling of waves of bliss. At first these are closely linked to the rhythm of inhalation and exhalation. Then, the waves begin to arise independently of deliberate breath control, when the mind is stilled (upon reaching the accumulation stage). With continued stabilisation, a threshold is reached, a point of complete saturation, at which the bliss ceases to be episodic and instead abides as a steady and natural state.

Śrī Maccidānanda Nātha (18/02/2026).